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to God, were never afterwards changed by priest or prophet. It strictly corresponds with the Hebrew and Septuagint in claiming Moses as the undoubted author of this part of the Bible, in the highest sense the mouth-piece of Jehovah. Jehovah, not Elohim, is the ruling word for the Deity; and it is therefore puerile to assert that because the Talmud says in one place that the prophets and the Hagiographa were implicitly given to Moses at Sinai, there must have been other oracles of divine truth. Does such an idea appear in the Vulgate or any other source of interpretation? It gives due place to the Law; in fact the idea of law, implying observance, would be lost without the five books of Moses. Starting with the full scope of levitical legislation, the sanctuary and the priesthood are made the highest types of religious approach to God, and prophetic instruction, though bearing a divine sanction, is not so high as the priestly, except where the duties of both priest and prophet were combined in one man. Though of secondary importance, it was a means to impress upon the people the spirit of Jehovah, that the knowledge of Him might dwell in every heart, as Israel entered the Tabernacle and sought and gained the peaceful blessing of the priesthood.

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### AL-TASHHETH.\*

BY REV. W. H. COBB, Uxbridge, Mass.

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To distinguish between conjecture and fact is a constant *desideratum* with Biblical students. That school of modern criticism whose most prominent teachers are Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen, seems to expend its ingenuity in a single direction, namely, in discovering discrepancies and incongruities unworthy of a revelation from God where humbler interpreters would find probable methods of adjustment. Its fertility of invention in that direction is balanced by a poverty of invention in the opposite direction. I admit that criticism as such should be unshackled by any theories of inspiration; but I claim that in many cases where it seems as easy to choose order and wisdom as discord and impropriety, the former have been sacrificed to the latter.

A well-known instance is the preference of the Septuagint to the Hebrew text of 1 Sam., chap. xvii., for this, among other reasons, that, after the slaying of Goliath, Saul seems ignorant of David, though the latter had been his armor-bearer. This diversity is still insisted on, though it has been well accounted for, in at least three or four different ways.

A less known instance appears in the title prefixed to a few of the Psalms, *Al-tashheth*; the reader may judge whether this phrase furnishes a foundation able to bear up the edifice of conjecture which has been built upon it.

Robertson Smith refers to this expression repeatedly in "The Old Testament

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|| אל-תשחת, *Destroy not.*

in the Jewish church"; also in his article "Hebrew language and literature" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He holds that *Al-tashheth*, "Destroy not," is the name of a familiar song, to the tune of which these four Psalms (LVII., LVIII., LIX., LXXV.) were to be sung; and that the first line of this song is preserved in Isa. LXV., 8, אֶל-תִּשְׁחִיתֶהוּ כִּי בִרְכָה בּוֹ, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." Mr. Cheyne, in his commentary on Isaiah, *in loco*, remarks that this parallelism has been independently conjectured by Prof. Robertson Smith and Mr. Samuel Sharpe. But what follows if the identity of reference in the Psalm and the Prophecy is admitted? Let Prof. Smith tell us (O. T. in Jewish Church). "These words in the Hebrew (of Isa. LXV., 8) have a distinct lyric rhythm. They are the first line of one of the vintage songs so often alluded to in Scripture. And so we learn that the early religious melody of Israel had a popular origin, and was closely connected with the old joyous life of the nation."

We find this remarkable argument again adduced, in order to strengthen a similar conjecture, on p. 105. "It may appear doubtful whether the oldest story of his life sets forth David as a psalmist at all. It is very curious that the Book of Amos (vi., 5) represents David as the chosen model of the dilettanti nobles of Ephraim, who lay stretched on beds of ivory, anointed with the choicest perfumes, and mingling music with their cups in the familiar manner of oriental luxury. Yet we know that David took a personal part in the procession which brought the ark up to Jerusalem with music and dance (2 Sam. vi.). . . . . The passage makes it clear that in those days religion was not separated from ordinary life, and that the gladness of the believing heart found natural utterance in sportful forms of unconstrained mirth. At a much later date, as we have seen, melodies of the Temple service were borrowed from the joyous songs of the vintage, and so it was possible that David should give the pattern alike for the songs of the sanctuary and for the worldly airs of the nobles of Samaria."

To most readers, the only comparison which Amos makes between David and the nobles of Samaria relates to the invention of instruments of music, (or, if we disregard the Hebrew accents, it relates to chanting to the sound of the viol); any parallelism between "songs for the sanctuary" and "worldly airs" is invented by the critic, not discovered in the text or legitimately inferred from it. The former part of the closing sentence in this quotation from Prof. Smith remands us to *Al-tashheth* (a jussive form, hence not *Al-tashith*, as Prof. Smith uniformly spells it. Strictly speaking, the transliteration should be *Al-tashheth*. Of course, the *tsere* becomes *hirik* again in the form *Al-tashhithehu* Isa. LXV., 8).

Concerning this title, it is claimed

1. That the Hebrew vintage festivals were occasions of joyous mirth.
2. That the passage in Isaiah, as it has a distinct lyric rhythm, was the first line of a vintage song.
3. That the title *Al-tashheth* in certain Psalms refers to this very song.
4. That these Psalms were sung to the tune of that vintage song. Hence
5. That the early religious melody of Israel expressed itself in forms of sportful mirth.

Of these positions, (1) is not only granted but insisted on. (2) is likely enough, though the verse quoted may have been from some other part of the song as well as the beginning. (3) and (4) are improbable in the extreme, and hence (5) falls to the ground.

This improbability is

a. *Psychological.* Were we to admit that the *gladness* of a believing heart might express itself to the tune of a merry vintage song, yet we ought not to assume, without incontestable proof, such a total depravity as the setting to a mirthful air such sentiments as those of the 58th Psalm for instance, or the plaintive cries of the 59th. It is not only true that the verse in Isa. LXV., 8 has a distinct lyric rhythm, but that this rhythm is exactly appropriate to the praises of wine and the vintage. It resembles closely the opening verse of the Horatian stanza, which was so often applied to a similar subject. Compare the three accents:—

Al-tashhithehu ki bh'rakhah bho.

Vides ut alta stet nive candidum.

It is common enough, in modern as in ancient times, to mis-join sacred hymns and gay airs; aside from camp-meeting melodies, it may not be amiss to mention that one of our old and unsuspected church tunes was originally a German drinking song; but still nothing can efface the psychological incongruity between major and minor, joy and sadness. Had the vintage musicians played their lively melodies to hearts bowed down with the feelings of these Psalms, they would never have tempted those hearts to pour out their fullness; they would have been constrained to exclaim: "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs\* to a heavy heart."

b. *Religious.* Let us form a mental picture of a group of jovial vintagers, treading out the grapes to the tune of "*Al-tashhithehu ki bh'rakhah bho*," the same rhythm that I have sometimes heard at sea in a song which sailors shout to each other: "O haul the bowline (pronounced bō'-lin), the packet she's a rollin'." Now will Prof. Smith attempt to express in such a melody the prayer of Ps. LVII., 1, "Be merciful unto me, O God! be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge till these calamities be overpast"; or that of LIX., 1, "Deliver me from mine enemies, O God; set me on high from them that rise up against me"? It is simply impossible, not merely from a psychological but from a religious standpoint. It shocks our spiritual sensibilities, for what communion hath light with darkness? The soul recoils from publishing the bans, and refuses to believe that Israel committed such sacrilege.

c. *Metrical.* Probably no one at the present day knows much about the laws of ancient Hebrew music; but the theory before us assumes that it closely resembled modern music, and this assumption refutes the theory. Thus, the passage in Isa. LXV., 8 is called the *first line* of a song, with a *distinct rhythm*, to the tune of which these Psalms were to be sung. We must, of course, then, find a similar rhythm at the beginning of each of these Psalms. Has it never occurred to the authors of this brilliant conjecture that no one of these Psalms will *go to that tune*? "*Al-tashhithehu*," etc. forms what our fathers would call a very particular metre. Amid the immense variety of modern music I remember nothing corresponding to it except the sailor doggerel I have quoted. Such a "*distinct rhythm*" could easily be recognized in the Psalms, if it were there; but nothing of the sort appears. Besides, the title of the Psalms is "*Al-tashheth*", which gives a different metrical effect from that of "*Al-tashhithehu*." One sees at once in English the difference between the Iambic "Dĕstróy ĭt nót", and the Amphibrach "Dĕstróy nót"; the difference is as plain at least in the Hebrew. Whatever Psalm may

\* שִׁירֹת *joyous songs*, opposed to קִינֹת. Cf. כָּלִי שִׁיר (Amos VI., 5).

be sung to the tune of the vintage song in Isa. LXV., 8 could not be sung to any tune beginning "*Al-tashheth*."

The reader will now see why I tax the so-called higher criticism with poverty of invention. Coming in contact with the obscure phrase *Al-tashheth*, it was allowable, of course, to understand by it the name of a tune, to which the Psalms in question were to be sung. But a very moderate degree of inventive genius would have suggested that there may have been a *vintage* song, "*Destroy it not*" (i. e. the cluster), and a *sacred* song "*Destroy not thy people,*" or "*him that trusteth in thee.*"

Will this conjecture abide the test of experiment? It looks promising at first. Psalms LVII. and LXXV. each commence with a word somewhat like אֱלֹהֵי תִשְׁחַת; הוֹדִינוּ and חֲנִנִי.

If we were to omit the לָךְ in LXXV., 1, which may be supposed to have crept into the text, we should have in the Athnah clause a striking metrical parallelism:

חֲנִנִי אֱלֹהִים חֲנִנִי כִּי בָךְ חֲסִיָּה  
הוֹדִינוּ אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרָב שְׂמֶךְ

But it will be seen that the resemblance is not quite perfect; nor does the first word in each correspond in accent with "*Al-tashheth*." The supposition breaks down, also, when we attempt to apply it to the other two *Al-tashheth* Psalms, LVIII. and LIX.

On the whole it seems best to abandon the view that *Al-tashheth* was the name of a tune. It is noticeable that while Gesenius does not speak positively on the subject, saying "*אֱלֹהֵי תִשְׁחַת* seems to be the first words of an earlier song, to the measure of which these Psalms were to be sung,"—Davies' lexicon simply says "it would seem to be *part* of some well-known song." Is it not better, then, to fall back on the supposition that some allusion is intended to the *contents* of these Psalms? "In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous."

## NOTES ON THE TARGUM AS A COMMENTARY.\*

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Prov. XXXI., 27. The common translation reads: "She looketh well to the ways of her house, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

While the grammatical construction of the sentence quoted offers no difficulty, it is obvious that, from a literary point of view we meet here with a bathos, entirely in discord with the general tenor of the beautiful poem. After having described the noble woman's virtues and untiring industry and forethought in all directions, to conclude with the praise that she eats no bread of idleness, is, to say the least a *gradatio ad minus*, and besides out of all logical connection with the preceding clause, "She superintends the ways of her house." The Targum, how-

\* These lines intend, by means of a few examples, to show that the Targum contains a good many interpretative elements which have not yet received the full attention which they may deserve.